

Rural Tourism Handbook - Introduction

Welcome to the world of tourism promotion!

It's actually a world that you've traveled through your entire life. We're all tourists at one time or another...whether we're taking a short trip to a neighboring community or a grand journey around the world. And it's the experience you've had as a tourist that will help you make decisions on how to promote your community or rural region to other tourists. That, plus the information we have compiled for you here.

California Tourism, the joint marketing venture of the California Travel and Tourism Commission and the California Division of Tourism is committed to encouraging visitors to get off the "beaten path" and explore all of the lesser known wonders that make the Golden State so intriguing. Certainly, advertising Yosemite National Park, San Francisco and Los Angeles are important since surveys indicate those attractions are among California's most famous, but state tourism officials have learned that most tourists want to see much more.

And that's where this handbook comes in.

Created by Western Tourism Development Associates for California Tourism, this book is intended to help you get started promoting your community to tourists through an easy-to-follow primer on tourism marketing. It is based on an original document created for the California Office of Tourism and the California Department of Commerce in 1987 by the Rural Tourism Center, Northern California Higher Education Council, California State University, Chico.

You'll find the very basics here, written with you in mind. You might be a chamber of commerce manager, balancing everything from the annual fundraiser to membership drives to economic development projects. Or you might be the volunteer leader of a local tourism committee. You might even be a full-time tourism professional already well acquainted with state tourism promotion efforts. Regardless, we hope you'll find this handbook to be a valuable addition to your tourism promotion library.



Speaking to the 1999 California Rural Tourism Conference, Noel Irwin-Hentschel, CEO of AmericanTours International said that traditional attractions

will continue to bring tourists to California, but newer experiences like our mountains, deserts, the Gold Country, our wine country etc., can ensure that large and small communities benefit from the economic boon of tourism.

Irwin-Hentschel added that travelers want more thoughtful and more active vacations, including “enrichment” tourism – visiting historic sites and cultural events.

As you’ll read later in the handbook, there is almost always something “promotable” as a tourist attraction in every community or region. Whether you are lucky enough to be located next to a national park or along the coast of the blue Pacific, or whether you’re clever enough to turn agricultural fields into major attractions (as Fresno has done so well with it’s “Blossom Trail” tours), tourism can be the ticket to local economic success for just about every community.

The demand is there, you just need a plan and a strategy. We hope that we will provide you with sufficient guidelines in the following pages to get you started successfully. We have laid out what we believe are the essentials to beginning a tourism promotion program, or fine-tuning the one you’ve already begun.

You’ll find chapters about why tourism is such an excellent form of economic development for your community, including the latest tourism trends and how to capitalize on them. We’ll help you analyze the assets your community can promote to visitors and how to find out who those visitors might be.

We’ll guide you through formulating a marketing plan and a public relations strategy. You’ll also find sections on how to take advantage of special events, niche tourism and Hollywood filming opportunities.

One of the great advantages small regions and communities have in the 21st Century is the Internet and its tremendous evolution as a tourism marketing medium. Now, any community can reach the entire globe with just a website and an e-mail address for inquiries. We think this is so important that we’ve dedicated an entire chapter to the web and how to maximize your opportunities there at minimum expense.



**For today's virtual tourist
the world is just a mouse-click away!**

But in tourism promotion as in life, things are easier with partners and friends. We'll provide you with a list of resources to turn to, as well as real examples of successful tourism promotion ideas.

Finally, we'll guide you through the confusing world of tourism acronyms so that you'll be able to "talk the talk" with the most experienced tourism marketers.

If you remember nothing more, know that the entire team of tourism promotion professionals at the California Travel and Tourism Commission and the California Division of Tourism are there to provide you with the latest information, guidance and promotional partnership opportunities. Contact names and numbers can be found at the back of this book.

Use this book as a tool to move your community ahead economically through the development of a stable, viable and exciting tourism industry.

Helpful Hint: Say hello to Eldon! He likes to think of himself as a "world traveler" who doesn't mind taking some of the comforts of home along on the trip. He appears in a few cartoons throughout the book, just to remind you that tourism is supposed to be fun! He also offers "helpful hints" along the way, to help you with your marketing efforts.

